

GENERAL NOTES

North American Herring Gulls nesting on a building.—The Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) was extirpated as a breeding bird in Massachusetts about 1889, and became re-established in 1912 (Forbush, 1928. "Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States," 1, p. 74). In the past fifty years it has bred in increasing numbers until now it is probably the most numerous marine bird nesting in the state. The breeding population is estimated to total about 70,000 birds (Wm. Drury, per. comm.).

Starting as a resident of islands and isolated coastal areas it has spread progressively closer to urban centers. Between five and ten years ago the vanguard of a colony became established on a peninsula of filled land jutting into Boston Harbor; by 1961 the colony had grown to approximately 750 pairs.

In June 1961 it was reported by the operators of a large pier, which covers about nine acres in the heart of the Boston waterfront, that Herring Gulls were nesting on the flat, tar-and-gravel roof of the building. The gulls were said to have begun breeding there "a few years" earlier. As the colony has grown it has become an increasingly serious economic problem since nesting material and unedible garbage clog the drains, causing rainwater to flood and damage the roof.

On 6 June 1961 about 150 nests were found. Roughly 100 contained eggs and a few had small chicks. On 28 June 1962 the colony was censused carefully in order to confirm the impression that the population had decreased and that the breeding season was less advanced than it had been in early June of the previous year. This time only 69 nests were found; 46 were empty, 21 had eggs, and two had young chicks. Many broken and punctured eggs were scattered about the roof; I never have seen such extensive cannibalism in a gull colony. The reason for the reduction in the number of breeding birds and the retardation of the season is uncertain, although it is probably partly because the maintenance men had more thoroughly and continually destroyed the nests early in the 1962 season than they had in the previous year.

This seems to be the first recorded instance of Herring Gulls nesting on a building in North America. It may well portend a wider adoption of this habit in the New World, paralleling a similar behavior by *L. a. argentatus*, first noted in Europe about 20 years ago (e.g., Salmon, 1958. *British Birds*, 51, pp. 399–401; Goethe, 1960. "Proc. XII Inter. Orn. Congress," 1, pp. 252–258). If this is the first step in the exploitation of a new nesting habitat, we shall probably see a continued increase in the gull population, with colonies springing up on buildings well inland from salt water and a portion of the population feeding extensively in agricultural areas.—RAYMOND A. PAYNTER, JR., *Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 18 December 1962.*

Notes on behavior of a Cooper's Hawk.—I feed birds regularly in the winter at my home on the banks of the Olentangy River in Columbus, Ohio, so it is not surprising that a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) is seen frequently in the vicinity. It is an adult male and appears to be slightly smaller than average. In the vicinity there are shrubs, trees, and lawns.

This bird comes to the yard, perches on a post, sometimes not 10 feet from our picture window, and searches for prey. The feeding birds, however, usually take cover before his arrival. The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) usually enter a martin house or a 6-foot hemlock nearby. When the hawk detects a movement in the hemlock, he darts to it, walks around on the ground and peers up into the branches. If he sees a bird he plunges into the foliage in an attempt to capture it. Usually the small bird flies out the other direction and